



TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF KURDISH STUDENTS' SILENCE INSIDE EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

The widespread use of silence among EFL students has been the subject of a number of researches. Interestingly, less attention has been paid to observing how teachers perceive this kind of silence. This study set out to investigate how teachers view this problem and find solutions or teaching strategies that might be used to engage silent learners inside the classroom. The data for this study were obtained through the use of a closed-ended questionnaire with a total of 40 teachers (20 males and 20 females) specialized in English language and literature in four different departments of English in universities of Duhok, Zakho, Nawroz and Cihan. According to the findings, both male and female teachers who are teaching Kurdish learners believe that Kurdish learners are silent learners inside EFL classes. This silent behaviour is due to lack of confidence, shyness, anxiety and lack of motivation inside the classroom. Finally, some teaching strategies have been suggested by the researcher to better engage silent learners inside the classroom.

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مفاهيم التدريسيين حول صمت الطلاب الكورد داخل فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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المستخلص

كان الاستخدام الواسع النطاق للصمت بين طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية موضوع عدد من الأبحاث. ومن المثير للاهتمام أنه تم إيلاء اهتمام أقل لمراقبة كيفية إدراك التدريسيين لهذا النوع من الصمت. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في كيفية رؤية التدريسيين لهذه المشكلة وإيجاد حلول أو استراتيجيات تدريس يمكن استخدامها لإشراك الطلاب الصامتين داخل الفصل الدراسي. تم الحصول على بيانات هذه الدراسة من خلال استخدام استبيان مغلق مع مجموعة مكونة من 40 مدرسا (20 ذكورا و 20 إناثا) متخصصين في اللغة و الادب الإنجليزي في أربعة أقسام مختلفة للغة الإنجليزية في جامعات دهوك وزاخو ونوروز وجيهان. ووفقا للنتائج، يعتقد كل من التدريسيين

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الذين شاركوا في البحث أن المتعلمين الكورد هم متعلمون صامتون داخل فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. هذا السلوك الصامت يرجع إلى انعدام الثقة والخجل والقلق ونقص الحافز داخل الفصل الدراسي. وأخيرا ، اقترح الباحث بعض استراتيجيات التدريس لإشراك الطلاب الصامتين بشكل أفضل داخل الفصل الدراسي.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الصمت عند الطلاب , الطلاب الكورد , مفاهيم التدريسين عن الصمت.

1. Statement of the Problem

A barrier to learning the target language among students of foreign languages has been found to be students' tendency to keep silent in class. Learning a new language to the point where you can use it with confidence, accuracy, and flexibility is a time-consuming process. A great deal of work, both in and out of class, is needed for such a lengthy process. Since producing and being able to engage verbally in the target language are so important to learning that language, the problem of EFL students not speaking up is a worry for both teachers and students. To put it another way, in order to become fluent in the target language, students need to do more than just sit passively and take notes in class.

1.1 Aims of the Research.

The silent behaviour demonstrated by learners during foreign language learning classes is a matter that holds crucial significance. Silence in classrooms can become a barrier for students towards learning the language. This study aims to find out the perceptions of the EFL teachers about Kurdish learners in general and their silence inside the classroom in particular.

1.2 Research Questions

This research is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the general perceptions of EFL teachers about Kurdish learners who are learning English as a foreign language?
2. How do teachers interpret Kurdish learners' silence?
3. What are the solutions that teachers follow to lessen the silence inside the classroom?
4. Does teacher' gender have an effect on their responses?

2. Literature Review

2.1 What is Silence?

The conceptualization of silence is widely regarded as one of the most puzzling aspects of all non-verbal conceptions in English language teaching. After all of the discussion and disagreement surrounding the concept, it becomes difficult to define silence in any one way that is appropriate. This is because there is no such thing as absolute silence; rather, meanings can only be relative to one another when silence is present. Researchers have known for a long time that the broader meaning of silence does have sound and words in it, despite the fact that the literal meaning of this notion signifies the absence of or inaudibility of sound or speech. For instance, when one person is keeping quiet, others may be speaking up simultaneously, causing words and silence to overlap in time.

The common occurrence of learners' silent throughout the class has been recorded as a violation. Students' silence frequently becomes a problem in the setting of the classroom because classrooms are supposed to be places for talking (Ollin, 2008). There are a lot of language teachers who have had to deal with awkward silences in their classrooms and struggled to get their students to be more engaged. As a result, they have worked hard to specify the reasons behind their students' silence . Silence has been defined differently by different linguists such as King et al. (2020: 61) state that silence is "an inherently complex and ambiguous phenomenon which can be devilishly difficult to interpret and which defies easy generalizations." Bruneau (1973) shows that silence can serve as inner time for one to absorb and reflect and it can also be a voice, which 'can 'say' something merely by leaving something unsaid'. Similarly, according to Bosacki (2005), silence is considered as the absence of vocalization. In his view, the common conception of silence is a total lack of audible verbalization and that the notion of silence can be broadened to include a student failing to present a specific subject matter or to say what is requested. As for classroom silence, Granger (2004) associates it with disobedience, conflict, misbehavior, and, in the case of students taking a listener role, deception. She argues that classroom silence enables students to hold onto performances and assumptions which may leave them vulnerable to their peers and teachers, it can be taken as a form of protection. According to Remedios, Clarke, and Hawthorne (2008), the term

"silence" in face-to-face social settings does not necessarily relate to complete lack of sound but rather to marginal conversation over the course of classroom discussion.

4.2 Silence in the Educational Context

Getting students who are too quiet to speak out inside the classroom is a major challenge for teachers of English as a foreign language. Numerous studies have been conducted to explore the silence of students in language classes. These studies have frequently focused on identifying factors that contribute to such silence with the goal of preventing students' silence (Chen 2003). An earlier body of study on student participation in the classroom, Lui, (2005) and Nakane (2005) took into account the cultural backgrounds of the students as well as their personalities as key contributors to student silence. According to Tsui (1996), student reluctance can be caused by a number of factors, including students' inability to comprehend the teacher's talk; students' fear of making mistakes and losing 'face'; and students' lack of sufficient time to assimilate material. Furthermore, factors such as a student's target language ability, previous speaking performance in class, confidence level, and the substance of the lesson are all potential reasons contributing to a student's tendency to be silent in language classrooms (Liu & Jackson, 2009; Delima, 2012).

Halawachy (2014) studied the silence of 43 university-level Iraqi EFL speakers and attempted to determine the reasons behind students' silence when comparing the levels of silence among male and female students, and she identified different reasons that cause learners' silence such as lack of confidence, anxiety, shyness and fear of making mistakes. Moreover, Harumi (2002) studied the impact of silence on intercultural communication among Japanese English majors. The study's findings suggested that some students, due to the variable extent to which individuals in other cultures expect to be called by name, are more comfortable speaking up when doing so. Tok (2009) investigated EFL Turkish students' difficulties with English language instruction. Anxiety and hesitation to speak up were found to be the most significant barriers to communication among Turkish students, with the extent to which these factors were experienced differing by gender and academic discipline. Using ethnographic research on silence

behaviours among postgraduate Chinese students in EFL classrooms, Liu and Mou (2008) dug deeper into the origins and cultural significance of silence. The results of this study show that the Chinese cultural concepts of face, authority, and shame in social connections play a role in the silent behaviours of Chinese learners.

Nakane (2007) discussed classroom case studies of three Japanese students who were enrolled in mainstream university courses in Australia. The studies included analysis of recorded classroom interaction as well as follow-up interviews with the Japanese participants, Australian lecturers, and fellow students in the classes. In the follow-up interviews, it was discovered that all of the Japanese students were judged to be "silent" by both their instructors and their classmates; however, the examination of classroom interaction indicated that the amount and nature of silence differed from student to student. In another study, Choi (2015) investigated the perceptions of as well as the causes behind, the low levels of conversational involvement and silence shown by Korean students enrolled in graduate programmes in the United States. According to the results of the survey, the participants rated themselves as the individuals in their classrooms who spoke the least. The students' lack of mastery of the English terminology related to their discipline, the effect of Korean classroom habits, and a desire to save face were some of the reasons behind their silence.

It is important to shed light on a study carried out by King (2013a, b) in which over 900 Japanese English learners studying in a higher education setting underwent almost 48 hours of structured classroom observation. King (2013a, b) discovered that students were responsible for less than 1% of initiated talk and that over a fifth of observed class time was marked by silence in which neither teacher nor students spoke.

5. Methodology

5.1 Sample

The participants of the current study were 40 EFL teachers (20 males and 20 females) teaching English as a foreign language in four departments of English in Duhok, Zakho, Nawroz and Cihan universities. The sample are of both specializations Linguistics and Literature. Both senior and junior teachers are included with experience 2-35 years. It is worth to note that gender balance has been taken into account by the researcher.

5.2 Instrument

It is commonly acknowledged that a questionnaire is the most well-known research instrument that is designed to gather data in the form of written responses. According to Walliman (2011: 97), a questionnaire is an effective instrument for collecting data since it enables the researcher to get responses without actually having to speak to every responder and avoid influencing the participants' answers." A researcher may get a large amount of data in a relatively short amount of time by employing a questionnaire. To find out the perceptions of EFL teachers about Kurdish learners who are learning English as foreign language, the present study adopted a quantitative data collection design. The quantitative data were obtained using a questionnaire. The researcher developed a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) specifically for EFL teachers. A Likert scale of five points was used to rate the questionnaire and as follows: 1. strongly agree; 2. agree; 3. not sure; 4. disagree; and 5. strongly disagree. Since all the respondents are EFL teachers at the department of English, the questionnaire was written in English. A preliminary version of the questionnaire was tested by a group of jury members to ensure its validity and reliability.

5.3 Data Collection

In this research, a questionnaire was used to collect data from 40 EFL teachers (20 males and 20 females) teaching English as a foreign language in the department of English in Duhok, Zakho, Nawroz and Cihan universities. The data obtained via the questionnaire were analysed and quantified using the SPSS programme (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The researcher adopted a descriptive

statistical method that involved frequencies, percentages and mean score to get an idea of the broad trend of responses from participants. An independent T-test is used to compare the responses of male and female teachers.

The items of the questionnaire were classified into three main parts which comprise teachers' general perceptions on Kurdish learners of English as a foreign language, teachers' interpretation of Kurdish learners' silence and the strategies that teachers follow to minimize this phenomenon.

6. The Analysis of the Data

1. Teachers' General Perception of Kurdish Learners of English as a Foreign Language

Teaching is an activity that involves both students and teachers, and it is generally accepted that silence is a common norm in the educational contexts (Shan,2020). According to White and Smith (1996), the definition of silence in the classroom is the absence of speech rather than thought, which relates to the limited or lack of engagement in classroom interaction. This section of the questionnaire is utilized to investigate teachers' general perceptions on Kurdish learners as EFL learners. It comprise ten items which have been rated by using Likert Scale.

It is obvious from the Table below that most of items in this section have recorded high percentages of agreeing. The highest percentage recorded is for item 7 'Kurdish learners are silent inside the classroom' in which male teachers agreed/ strongly agreed with 95% and female teachers with 75%. This result is a very important indication that silence is a very common phenomenon within EFL classrooms of Kurdish learners. The second highest percentage is recorded for item 2 'Kurdish learners are shy and anxious' in which male teachers agreed/ strongly agreed with 90% and female teachers with 80%. Similarly, both male and female teachers believe that Kurdish learners in EFL classes are passive and unwilling to learn with percentages 80% and 70% for males and females respectively. In addition to that, male teachers show their agreement towards items 4 'Kurdish learners are polite', item 5 'they lack confidence', item 9 'they have gap between knowledge and oral skills' and item 10 'psychological support is needed' with percentages 60%, 80%, 80% and 75% respectively. Likewise, female teachers agreed/strongly agreed

with the same items with percentages 85%, 75%, 60% and 75% respectively. In contrast, both male and female teachers showed their disagreement towards items 6 ‘Kurdish learners are serious’ and 8 ‘Kurdish learners are critical thinkers’ with percentages (60% and 70% for male teachers) and (70% and 85% for female teachers as shown in the table below:

Table (1) Teachers’ General Perceptions of Kurdish Learners in EFL Classrooms

| # | items | Gender | Percentage % | | | | | Means | Ranking | | Results |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------|--------------|----|-----|----|-----|-------|---------|----------|---------------------|
| | | | SA | A | Und | D | S.D | | T Test | P-Value* | |
| 1 | Motivated and eager to learn. | M | 20 | 15 | 10 | 20 | 35 | 2.65 | 1.057 | 0.297 | No Difference |
| | | F | 15 | 35 | 20 | 10 | 20 | 3.15 | | | |
| 2 | Shy and anxious. | M | 70 | 20 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 4.60 | 2.390 | 0.022 | There is Difference |
| | | F | 30 | 50 | 5 | 10 | 5 | 3.90 | | | |
| 3 | Passive | M | 40 | 30 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 3.85 | 1.173 | 0.248 | No Difference |
| | | F | 30 | 10 | 10 | 25 | 10 | 3.32 | | | |
| 4 | polite. | M | 15 | 45 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 4.45 | 1.186 | 0.243 | No Difference |
| | | F | 30 | 55 | 0 | 5 | 10 | 3.90 | | | |
| 5 | Lack confidence | M | 65 | 15 | 15 | 5 | 0 | 4.40 | 1.493 | 0.144 | No Difference |
| | | F | 35 | 40 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 3.90 | | | |
| 6 | Serious | M | 5 | 15 | 20 | 20 | 40 | 2.25 | 0.492 | 0.625 | No Difference |
| | | F | 10 | 15 | 5 | 50 | 20 | 2.45 | | | |
| 7 | Silent inside the classroom | M | 65 | 25 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 4.50 | 0.288 | 0.775 | No Difference |
| | | F | 30 | 45 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 3.85 | | | |
| 8 | Critical thinkers | M | 5 | 5 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 2.05 | 2.068 | 0.049 | There is Difference |
| | | F | 5 | 5 | 5 | 50 | 35 | 1.95 | | | |
| 9 | Gap between knowledge and oral skills | M | 50 | 30 | 5 | 15 | 0 | 4.15 | 0.637 | 0.528 | No Difference |
| | | F | 35 | 25 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 3.95 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|---|------|-------|-------|---------------|
| 10 | Psychological support is needed. | M | 60 | 25 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 4.35 | 1.621 | 0.113 | No Difference |
| | | F | 25 | 50 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 3.80 | | | |
| *Significant at level P-value ≤ 0.05 | | | | | | | | | | | |

The descriptive analysis of the above data shows that the highest mean recorded is 4.60 for item 2 which means that male teachers do believe that Kurdish learners are shy and anxious whereas the lowest means is 1.95 for item 8 which indicates the disagreement of female teachers that Kurdish learners are critical thinkers .

The above Table also indicates that there are differences between the responses of male and female teachers towards items 2 and 8 since the values of the calculated significant level (p-value) are (0.022 and 0.049) respectively which are less than the default value of the study (0.05). This means that male and female teachers have different opinions about Kurdish learners being shy, anxious and critical thinkers. The p-value of the other items show no difference between the responses of male and female teachers .

2. Teachers' Interpretation of Kurdish Learners' Silence in EFL Classrooms

Learners' silence inside the classroom is interpreted by teachers as a sign of disinterest, resistance, or lack of intelligence. In this point, teachers have shown their opinions on eight most common interpretations about Kurdish learners' silence in EFL classrooms, as shown in the following table:

Table (2) Teachers' interpretation of Kurdish Learners' Silence

| # | Items | Gender | Percentage % | | | | | Means | Ranking | | Results |
|---|---|--------|--------------|----|-----|----|-----|-------|---------|----------|---------------------|
| | | | SA | A | Und | D | S.D | | T Test | P-Value* | |
| 1 | Learners do not know the answers. | M | 40 | 30 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 3.85 | 0.450 | 0.655 | No Difference |
| | | F | 35 | 35 | 10 | 0 | 20 | 3.65 | | | |
| 2 | Learners do not understand the lecture. | M | 30 | 40 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 3.75 | 0.864 | 0.899 | No Difference |
| | | F | 30 | 35 | 15 | 15 | 5 | 3.70 | | | |
| 3 | Learners are thinking how to answer. | M | 40 | 15 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 3.95 | 1.259 | 0.216 | No Difference |
| | | F | 25 | 45 | 0 | 10 | 20 | 3.45 | | | |
| 4 | Learners are shy. | M | 65 | 30 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4.60 | 2.600 | 0.013 | There is difference |
| | | F | 30 | 45 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 3.45 | | | |
| 5 | Learners are bored. | M | 40 | 30 | 25 | 0 | 5 | 4.00 | 0.131 | 0.896 | No Difference |
| | | F | 50 | 20 | 10 | 15 | 5 | 3.95 | | | |
| 6 | Learners lack confidence. | M | 80 | 15 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 4.70 | 2.294 | 0.027 | There is difference |
| | | F | 35 | 50 | 5 | 10 | 0 | 4.10 | | | |
| 7 | Learners are not motivated. | M | 15 | 55 | 15 | 15 | 0 | 3.70 | 0.161 | 0.873 | No Difference |
| | | F | 15 | 55 | 15 | 10 | 5 | 3.65 | | | |
| 8 | Learners are afraid of mistakes. | M | 15 | 35 | 40 | 10 | 0 | 4.00 | 0.580 | 0.565 | No Difference |
| | | F | 0 | 50 | 30 | 15 | 5 | 3.80 | | | |

*Significant at level P-value ≤ 0.05

It is apparent from the data presented in the above table that 70% of both male and female EFL teachers agreed or strongly agreed on items 1 'Learners do not know the answer', 7 'Learners are not motivated', and 5 'Learners are bored'. Similarly, 70% of male and 65% of female teachers believe that students keep silent inside EFL

classrooms because they do not understand the lecture. The great majority of both male (95%) and female (75%) teachers agreed or strongly agreed with items 4 ‘learners are shy’ and 6 ‘learners lack confidence’, whereas both items 3 ‘learners are thinking how to answer’ and 8 ‘learners are afraid of mistakes’ reveal a high percentage of undecided, which ranges between 45% and 30%.

It is worth to note that male teachers almost agreed on all the items which is indicated by the means which range between 4.70 – 3.70. The highest mean (4.70) indicates that the majority of the male teachers confirm that lack of confidence is the main reason behind Kurdish learners’ silence. Likewise, female teachers also show their strong agreement towards the items in the above table. This agreement is indicated by means scores which range between 4.10- 3.45 in which the highest mean is for item 6. This approves that both male and female teachers agree that Kurdish learners lack confidence inside EFL classrooms which make them remain silent.

The above table also displays the results of the independent T-test which shows that there are differences between the responses of male and female teachers towards items 4 ‘*Learners are shy*’ and 6 ‘*Learners lack confidence*’ since the values of the calculated significant level (p-value) are (0.13 and 0.027) respectively which is less than the default value of the study (0.05). Other items show no differences since the p-value is greater than the default value of the study (0.05). This means that both male and female teachers have the same opinions about Kurdish learners.

1. Strategies that Teachers Follow to Minimize Kurdish Learners’ Silence in EFL Classrooms?

In this part of the questionnaire, participants show their opinions on seven items that include some methods to minimize learners’ silence inside EFL classrooms. It is clear from the descriptive statistics in the following table that both male and female teachers almost agreed/ strongly agreed on every item in this part.

The following table shows that 100% of male teachers and 95% of female teachers agreed/strongly agreed on item 1 that teachers should encourage their students to participate inside the classroom. Similarly, male and female teachers agreed/ strongly agreed with high percentages on almost every item in the section which ranges between 100%- 60%. The highest mean recorded is 4.70 for the male teachers’ responses on item 1 and female

teachers' on item 7. The means for the other items range between 4.55- 3.50 which indicates that almost all the participants agreed and strongly agreed on these item. The independent T-test shows no difference in the responses of male and female teachers because all the p-values are greater than the default value of the research which is 0.05.

Table (3) Strategies that Teachers Follow to Minimize Kurdish Learners' Silence inside EFL Classrooms

| # | Items | Gender | Percentage % | | | | | Means | Ranking | | Results |
|---|--|--------|--------------|----|-----|----|-----|-------|---------|----------|---------------|
| | | | SA | A | Und | D | S.D | | T Test | P-Value* | |
| 1 | Encourage them to participate. | M | 70 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.70 | 0.876 | 0.387 | No Difference |
| | | F | 60 | 35 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 | | | |
| 2 | Adjust my style of teaching. | M | 60 | 35 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 | 0.000 | 1.000 | No Difference |
| | | F | 55 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 | | | |
| 3 | Be patient with them. | M | 30 | 30 | 10 | 20 | 2 | 3.50 | 1.876 | 0.068 | No Difference |
| | | F | 55 | 30 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 4.25 | | | |
| 4 | Call learners by their names to participate. | M | 50 | 25 | 5 | 10 | 2 | 3.95 | 0.360 | 0.721 | No Difference |
| | | F | 35 | 35 | 10 | 15 | 1 | 3.80 | | | |
| 5 | Advise them not to be silent. | M | 25 | 55 | 15 | 5 | 0 | 4.00 | 0.288 | 0.775 | No Difference |
| | | F | 45 | 25 | 15 | 5 | 2 | 3.90 | | | |
| 6 | Allow learners to work in pairs or groups | M | 70 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.70 | 0.967 | 0.340 | No Difference |
| | | F | 55 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 | | | |
| 7 | Repeat and explain again. | M | 45 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 4.35 | 0.743 | 0.462 | No Difference |
| | | F | 60 | 35 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4.55 | | | |

*Significant at level P-value ≤ 0.05

7. Discussion

From the data analysed in the previous section, several themes have merged. Firstly, most of the teaching staff members who responded to the questionnaire believe that Kurdish learners are silent learners inside EFL classes. Silence has been reported and perceived negatively in language learning. It is consistent with White's (1996: 37) definition of silence as limited or absent engagement during classroom interaction (as cited in Min, 2016). Similarly, students' silence was highlighted as those who still have difficulty communicating their ideas in English

as a foreign language and tend to stay quiet, and do not answer the teacher's question (Juniati, 2018). Secondly, lack of motivation is another important perception that EFL teachers have on Kurdish learners. According to Abdullah (2014), there is a term called 'intrinsic motivation' that can be defined as students' interest to learn the language. In this regard, students can be categorized as unmotivated if they are losing focus on English for a quite long time and also there was no effort shown by the students in mastering English. Another important theme emerged is learners' lack of confidence. The majority of the teachers confirmed that Kurdish learners lack-confidence inside EFL classrooms as Weihua (2018) stated that anxiety, nervousness and low-confidence are the main reasons behind learners' silence inside the classroom. Other perceptions that teacher have on Kurdish learners are shyness, anxiety, lack of critical thinking, passive but polite.

In addition to that, teachers interpreted Kurdish learners silence in a variety of ways. The majority of the teachers believed that the main two reasons behind learners' silence is not knowing the answer and their lack of confidence. Other reasons may go back to lack of motivation, their fear of doing mistakes and boredom.

It is worth to mention that all the teachers (both males and females without any considerable difference) agreed on the methods that are suggested to minimize learners' silence inside the classroom. The highest method agreed on by both male and female teachers is allowing learners to work in pairs or groups which makes them get engaged inside the classroom. In the next section, I will suggest some useful teaching strategies that teachers can follow to lessen silence inside EFL classrooms.

8. Conclusions and Suggested Teaching Strategies

8.1 Conclusions

Teachers are well-acquainted with the notion of silence. The maintenance of silence is an essential component of the day-to-day procedures that teachers perform in the classroom, whether their goal is to encourage hesitant students into participation or to calm down noisy students. The use of silence as a communicative resource in foreign language classrooms has been viewed as a resource that is at once complex, confusing, and meaningful. It is important to realize that both male and female teachers who are teaching Kurdish learners believe that Kurdish learners are silent and quiet inside EFL classrooms. They also confirm that the

majority of Kurdish learners are passive, unmotivated and experience a high level of anxiety inside the classroom. In this section, the answers of both male and female teachers are almost similar except with items 2 'Kurdish learners are shy and anxious' and 8 'Kurdish learners are critical thinkers'

It is important to point out that the teachers agree that the majority of the Kurdish students' lack of confidence and timidity in the classroom is the reason for their silent behaviour. According to the results of statistical analysis, there are some differences in the responses of males and females with regard to items 4 and 6, which are titled "being shy" and "lack of confidence," respectively. In regard to the other items, there is no statistically significant difference in the responses provided by male and female teachers. Nearly all of the educators are of the opinion that, in order to engage silent students inside the classroom, they should implement specific measures, such as utilising a variety of teaching approaches, demonstrating patience with the students, and developing an atmosphere that is supportive.

8.2 Suggested Teaching Strategies to Engage Silent Learners

The results of this investigation provide convincing evidence that teachers who are teaching Kurdish learners believe that the majority of Kurdish learners are silent inside the classroom. This silence is due to lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, shyness, anxiety and fear of doing mistakes. In order to minimize this phenomenon among Kurdish learners, teacher can follow the following strategies:

1. Create a Positive and Supportive Environment

Enhancing students' cognitive abilities and fostering self-reliance in problem-solving are key outcomes of this intervention. Several characteristics contribute to the creation of a pleasant learning environment, including the establishment of a supportive learning culture, the meeting of learners' needs, and the encouragement of student participation in all activities.

2. Utilize Other Forms of Participation

Consider alternative techniques of participation in the classroom beyond verbal communication. Students from diverse backgrounds can derive advantages from expanding their comprehension of the various dimensions that encompass classroom participation, including activities such as attentiveness, active listening, note-taking, and timely completion of assignments. Educators ought to actively promote and recognise alternative modes of classroom engagement.

3. Ask for Written Responses Regularly

Ask students to write down their thoughts. Quiet students typically prefer writing to speaking because it gives them more time to think and develop their responses. Teachers might use written responses as an alternative to spoken communication, as a supplement, or as the basis for classroom discussions. Writing before speaking may help academically challenged students. Written papers can help all students demonstrate their understanding of the course subject, which is the most significant form of classroom interaction.

4. Build a Strong Teacher-Student Relationship

Students may be silent because they feel at odds with the classroom environment, the campus environment, or because they have trouble connecting their life experiences to the classroom content (Schultz 2009). Thus, one strategy is to ask questions that invite students with a wide range of experiences to talk about their lives and find connections between their lives and course content or materials (Medaille et al., 2019). Kind relationships with teachers, such as providing additional information and help, can motivate students and foster positive attitudes towards school and engagement in the teaching and learning process, while negative relationships can stress students in the classroom (Baker, 2006).

5. Give Encouragement

Extrinsic motivation, such as awards, compliment, and other external recognition, can encourage students to participate in class discussions, and teachers play a vital role in this (Griskell, Gámez, & Lesaux, 2020). Typical feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and self-doubt during language study have a deleterious effect on both intrinsic motivation and language acquisition. Therefore, it's important for learners to have interest while learning (Somers & Llinares, 2018). Extrinsic motivation, such as reward and passing an exam, is not as effective as the intrinsic motivation induced by positive attributes in maintaining effort (Bower, 2017). Teachers recognise that intrinsic factors like students' enjoyment of the class and the teacher's likeability are less important in determining motivation than extrinsic factors like students' avoidance of punishment and a desire for reward in the learning process (ibid).

6. Organise Group Presentations

The incorporation of group presentations into educational settings is a technique that is often combined with group discussions. This approach is aligned with student-centred learning as it aims to foster creative and independent learning among students. The instructional strategies that can be implemented involve teachers organising students into multiple groups, providing them with the necessary information on the topics, and allowing students to independently develop their chosen topic for presentation. According to Mahmud (2017), this technique has a positive impact on students by facilitating the expression of ideas and fostering increased classroom discussion. It is evident that individuals who remain silent during group interactions possess multiple identities.

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Appendix

Teacher's Questionnaire

Dear teacher

This questionnaire is part of a research study on Silence in classroom discourse in a university L2 environment. You are kindly requested to response to items of this questionnaire. Your answers are very important for the validity and reliability of this research. As such, we hope that you will give it your full attention and interest. We would be grateful if you could take the time to share your experience by doing what is kindly required. Please note that your all personal information will be kept confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of this study

Section One: Personal Information

1- Gender

Female

Male

2- Teaching experience years

3- Average number of students in the class

Section two: Teaching English language to Kurdish learners

1. Teachers' general impressions on Kurdish learners of English as a foreign language

| No. | Items | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----|------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Motivated and eager to learn | | | | | |
| 2 | shy and anxious | | | | | |
| 3 | Passive/ unwilling to learn | | | | | |
| 4 | Polite | | | | | |
| 5 | Lacking confidence | | | | | |
| 6 | serious | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 7 | Silent inside the classroom | | | | | |
| 8 | Critical thinkers | | | | | |
| 9 | Gap between knowledge and oral skills | | | | | |
| 10 | Psychological support is needed | | | | | |

2.If your students keep silent, how do you interpret their use and meaning of silence?

| No. | Items | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----|--|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Learners do not know the answer. | | | | | |
| 2 | Learners do not understand the lecture | | | | | |
| 3 | Learners are thinking how to answer. | | | | | |
| 4 | Learners are shy | | | | | |
| 5 | Learners are bored. | | | | | |
| 6 | Learners lack confidence. | | | | | |
| 7 | Learners are not motivated | | | | | |
| 8 | Learners are afraid of mistakes | | | | | |

3.What do you do if your students keep silent?

| No. | Items | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Not sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----|---|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | Encourage them to participate. | | | | | |
| 2 | Adjust my style of teaching | | | | | |
| 3 | Be patient with them | | | | | |
| 4 | Call students by name individually. | | | | | |
| 5 | Advise them not to be silent. | | | | | |
| 6 | Allow students to work in pairs or groups | | | | | |
| 7 | Repeat and explain again | | | | | |

Thanks a lot for your kind cooperation